

DESERT SHEEP RANCH, SCHOOLHOUSE  
Joshua Tree National Monument  
Twentynine Palms Vic.  
San Bernardino County  
California

HABS NO. CA-2347-D

HABS  
CAL  
36-TNPALV,  
ID-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Building Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### DESERT QUEEN RANCH--SCHOOLHOUSE

(William F. Keys Ranch--Schoolhouse)

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**Location:** Joshua Tree National Monument, Twentynine Palms vicinity, San Bernardino County, California.

**Present owner:** National Park Service; Joshua Tree National Monument.

**Present Occupant:** Unoccupied.

**Present Use:** Restoration of site; occasional summer tours.

**Significance:** The Keys Desert Queen Ranch in the Joshua Tree National Monument is an outstanding historical site of desert-based vernacular technologies displaying a range of architectural and engineering artifacts associated with the Euro-American era of settlement in the Mojave desert. The site is largely intact with nine buildings and four ore mills surviving. The schoolhouse was originally a tent cabin. After it was enclosed, it served briefly as the schoolhouse.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** In 1930-31 this building was built as a tent cabin, with the bottom half of single-layer board, and the top half of tent canvas. In 1935-36 the shingled roof was added, later covered with metal.
2. **Original and subsequent owners:** The cabin may have been brought in from another site, in which case the original owner is not known; William Keys was subsequent owner.
4. **Builders, suppliers:** probably William Keys.
5. **Original plans and construction:** originally a tent cabin.
6. **Alterations and additions:** original tent half of cabin replaced with wooden upper wall and roof, which was later covered with metal.

##### B. Historical Information:

For more information on the Desert Queen Ranch, see HABS No. CA-2347.

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The schoolhouse was used for schooling, but only for a very short time. Oran Booth taught for 6 months, January - June 1930. There were no desks there at that time, only a few chairs. The desks were brought more recently from the South House. Originally the North House or "Teacher's House" was considered the schoolhouse, and then later the South House was built and became the schoolhouse.<sup>1</sup>

The little desks that are now in this cabin were originally brought to the ranch by the county. Phyllis Keys also remembers the cabin having a double bed, a chair, and a dresser. The picture of Hiawatha was hung on the wall later, after the desks were put in the cabin.<sup>2</sup>

Later this building was used by Willis Keys as a bedroom.

**PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

**A. General Statement:**

1. **Architectural character:** Typical mining cabin: wood-frame building with gable roof; one doorway; of various-width unfinished boards over frame exposed inside. Inside walls were covered with oilcloth.
2. **Condition of fabric:** The wood structure is very dry and fragile.

**B. Description of Exterior:**

1. **Overall dimensions:** 9'-9" x 11'-9"
2. **Foundations:** On three 8" x 8"s running longitudinally under the floor. The whole structure sits on the ground.
3. **Walls:** Originally a tent cabin. Canvas tent fabric replaced with 6" horizontal board and batten on the north end, and in the south gable. Vertical boards elsewhere.
4. **Structural system, framing:** Simple wood frame.
5. **Chimneys:** None existing but in the northwest corner of roof just above the eaves a hole for stovepipe is visible from inside cabin.
6. **Openings:**

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<sup>1</sup>Willis Keys, son of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis at Joshua Tree National Monument, July 8-9, 1993, and at North Fork, CA, July 16-18, 1993, tape 3A.

<sup>2</sup>Phyllis Keys Meidell, daughter of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis in Hesperia, CA, August 24-25, 1993, tape 3B.

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- a. **Doorways and doors:** One paneled left-hand door on north wall.
  - b. **Windows and shutters:** One awning-type window (six lights) on the north wall west of door; and two sliding windows (six lights each) on the south wall.
8. **Roof:** Gable, covered with corrugated sheet metal with iron mining railroad ties holding down the metal.

**C. Description of Interior:**

- 1. **Floor Plans:** One open space.
- 2. **Flooring:** Tarpaper over wood--newly installed by the National Park Service.
- 3. **Wall and ceiling finish:** None; exposed posts and outside wood boards.
- 4. **Hardware:** Hinges on door and windows used flat on stiles and frames; lockset mortised into door.

**PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

See Desert Queen Ranch, HABS No. CA-2347.

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

See Desert Queen Ranch, HABS No. CA-2347.

ADDENDUM TO  
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